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## **Aids to Bible Readers.**

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### THE HISTORY OF NEW TESTAMENT TIMES.

THE inner life of any man, his thought, his character, his achievements, his teachings, can be justly estimated only when seen in relation to his outer life—his history in the external sense. This outer life of the individual, again, can be understood only as it is looked at in relation to the history of his times. Jesus Christ, different in marked features from other men, was yet in this respect like them. Alike his outer life, made up of missionary journeys, days of teaching, deeds of mercy and of power, endurance of toil and of suffering, and his inner life, his character and his teachings, are fully intelligible only against the background of contemporaneous Jewish history. And what is true of the life of Jesus is no less true of the lives of the apostles, and the history of the apostolic church.

The recognition of this fact, which is merely a particular application of an almost universally accepted principle of historical study, has given to the history of New Testament times a standing as a distinct and important department both of historical and of biblical study.

One obstacle to the pursuit of this study on the part of those who have had but little experience in historical study is the difficulty of keeping the main features of the record clearly before the mind. The tendency is to lose all perspective in the mass of details. With a view to meeting this difficulty in a measure and to encouraging the readers of the BIBLICAL WORLD to undertake this line of study—so helpful as auxiliary to the study of the New Testament itself—the following table of leading events has been prepared. For the sake of connecting Old Testament history with that of the New Testament, the table begins with the return from the captivity. The study of which

we are now speaking, however, may well begin with the accession of Antiochus IV, in whose reign the Jews began the effort for religious freedom which issued at length in political independence. It need hardly be said that such a table of events is of very little use except as a skeleton to be clothed with the flesh of fuller information. Nor should the student be content with a knowledge of the political history of Palestine in that period. This is indispensable as a basis, but on it should be built as thorough knowledge as possible of the intellectual, social, moral, and religious life of the Jewish people. It is this knowledge that is most directly valuable in the interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus and his apostles.

The fuller information necessary to give a valuable knowledge both of the political and of the social and religious history is now easily accessible to English readers. A list of books by the help of which this study can be carried on is added at the end of the table.

LEADING EVENTS OF JEWISH HISTORY FROM THE RETURN  
FROM THE CAPTIVITY TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERU-  
SALEM BY THE ROMANS.

THE PERSIAN PERIOD. 538-333 B. C.

- 538 or 536 B. C. Return of the Jews from Babylon under Zerubbabel.
- 458. Ezra came to Jerusalem.
- 445. Nehemiah came to Jerusalem.

THE GREEK PERIOD. 333-142 B. C.

- 333. By Alexander's conquest of Persia Palestine was brought under Greek dominion.
- 323. In the partition of Alexander's empire after his death, Palestine passed with Egypt into the hands of Ptolemy.
- 200 (*circa*) After repeatedly passing from Egypt to Syria, and back to Egypt, Palestine finally became a part of the dominion of Syria under Antiochus III the Great.
- 175-164. Reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. When Antiochus Epiphanes came to the throne the Jewish nation had already been affected in no small degree by Greek influence, so that there existed a strong Hellenizing party, opposed, however, by the sect of the Chasidim, the "pious." The high priest

- B. C. Onias III, an anti-Hellenist, was removed and his brother Jason, a Hellenist who promised Antiochus a large sum of money for his appointment, was given the high-priesthood. Under Jason the Hellenizing process went on more rapidly. Menelaus offering a still larger sum for the office of high priest, Jason was deposed and Menelaus appointed in his stead. In 170, Antiochus being absent in Egypt, and it being reported that he was dead, the city was thrown into an uproar and Jason regained the priesthood. Antiochus returning treated the occurrence as a revolt, attacked Jerusalem, massacred citizens, plundered the temple. In 168 Antiochus being defeated in his plans against Egypt turned his anger against Palestine, and undertook the extermination of the Jewish religion and the complete Hellenizing of Judea. The walls of Jerusalem were thrown down, but the old city of David was fortified and occupied by a Syrian garrison. The observance of Jewish rites, the Sabbath, and circumcision, was prohibited. Those who resisted were put to death. In December 168 at the great altar of burnt offering in the temple of Jerusalem a pagan altar was built, and on the 25th Chisleu sacrifices were offered on it.
167. Mattathias, a loyal priest living at Modin, led an active revolt against the oppressions of Antiochus. Seeing a Jew about to offer sacrifice in obedience to the command of the king's commissioner, he slew both the Jew and the royal commissioner. He then fled with his sons to the mountains, and gathered about him those who were willing to fight to secure freedom to worship Jehovah. The Chasidim attached themselves to him. He died within a few months, committing the work to his sons.
- 166-142. The struggle for religious freedom and political independence under the sons of Mattathias.
- 166-161. Judas, surnamed Maccabeus. Judas, the third son of Mattathias, succeeded his father as leader of the movement. Gathering an army of 6000 men, he was successful in several battles, regained possession of Jerusalem, and just three years after the pollution of the altar, having cleansed and rededicated the temple, he offered sacrifices on the reconsecrated altar, 25th Chisleu, 165 B. C. In 163 B. C. the Syrian general, being obliged to withdraw his army from Judea to

B. C. attend to matters at home, granted to the Jews religious freedom, the right "to observe their own institutions as formerly." This freedom was not again denied by Syria. Thus all that the movement originally inaugurated by Mattathias had aimed at was secured. But the Jews were still in political subjection to Syria, and there still existed a strong Hellenizing party opposed to the Maccabees. With a view to acquiring political independence, Judas made a treaty with the Romans. In 161 B. C. he was defeated by the Syrians and slain in the battle of Eleasa.

161-143. Jonathan, the fifth son of Mattathias. The internal conflicts of Syria enabled the Maccabean party to strengthen their position, both against the Syrians and against the Hellenizing Jews. At home the Maccabees gained the supremacy, but Jonathan died in 143 without having thrown off the Syrian yoke.

#### INDEPENDENCE UNDER THE ASMONEANS (MACCABEES). 142-63 B. C.

142-135. Simon, second and last surviving son of Mattathias. Simon secured from Demetrius II, one of the rival claimants to the Syrian throne, the recognition of the freedom of Judea from tribute to Syria. The Jews reckoned their political independence from this date (142). Later in the same year he recovered the stronghold of Zion, which had been held by the Syrians since the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. In 141 the Jews declared Simon high priest, general, and ethnarch (ecclesiastical, military, and civil head of the nation), and made these offices hereditary. In 139 an embassy sent to Rome by Simon obtained from the Roman senate a decree guaranteeing to the Jews unrestricted possession of their territory.

135-105. John Hyrcanus, son of Simon. Judea came once again under the Syrian dominion, but only for a short time, and the independence of Syria then regained was not again lost. John Hyrcanus entered upon a career of conquest, conquering Samaria and Idumea. An important event in his reign was his break with the Pharisees and his alliance with the Sadducees. (This is the earliest point in the history at which these parties are mentioned under these names.)

105-104. Aristobulus I, son of John Hyrcanus. Hyrcanus left his

- B. C. throne to his wife, but Aristobulus starved his mother in prison, imprisoned his brothers, except Antigonus, whom later he caused to be slain, and usurped the authority. He was the first Maccabean to bear the title of king. He made some conquests in the north, Galilee or Ituræa.
- 104-78. Alexander Jannæus. On the death of Aristobulus, his widow, Salome Alexandra, released his brothers from prison, married the eldest, Alexander Jannæus, and made him high priest and king. His reign was marked by wars of defense and conquest as a result of which he greatly extended the boundaries of the Jewish state, bitter conflicts with the Pharisees, and acts of oppression and cruelty towards the people. It is said that 50,000 Jews perished in the internecine conflicts of Alexander's reign.
- 78-69. Alexandra. The throne which Alexander had received from his wife he left to her at his death. Her reign was in almost every respect the opposite of his. She allied herself with the Pharisees, and ruled in accordance with their counsel, though her son, Hyrcanus, whom she made high priest, sided with the Sadducees. Her reign was looked upon in after years as a golden age of peace and prosperity.
- 69-63. Aristobulus II. After the death of Alexandra, her younger son, Aristobulus, having conquered Hyrcanus in battle, compelled the latter to surrender to him the office of high priest and of king. Antipater, the Idumean, son and successor of Antipater whom Alexander Jannæus had appointed tetrarch of Idumea, perceiving an opportunity to gain advantage for himself, allied himself with Hyrcanus, and persuaded him to seek to regain his power. A struggle ensued which lasted till 63 B. C.

THE ROMAN PERIOD. 63 B. C.-70 A. D.

- 63-40. Hyrcanus II. The Roman general, Pompey, being appealed to by both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, sided with Hyrcanus and Antipater; gained possession of Jerusalem, and appointed Hyrcanus high priest, though forbidding him to assume the title of king and depriving him of all the territory acquired by the Maccabees. Thus Palestine really lost the independence she had enjoyed since 142 B. C.

- B. C. Aristobulus was sent a captive to Rome. His son, Alexander, and later Aristobulus himself and his son Antigonus, escaping from imprisonment, made repeated unsuccessful efforts to recover control of Palestine. In 47 B. C., after the death of Pompey, Antipater gave timely aid to Cæsar in his Egyptian campaign, and was rewarded by being made a Roman citizen and procurator of Judea, Hyrcanus being made high priest and ethnarch. The government was in reality in the hands of the Idumean. A portion of the lost territory was restored. Antipater appointed his son Herod governor of Galilee; and a little later Sextus Cæsar, procurator of Syria, set him over Coele-Syria. After the death of Cæsar (44 B. C.), Antipater and Herod attached themselves to Cassius and secured his favor. In 43 B. C. Antipater was poisoned. After the defeat of Brutus and Cassius by Antony and Octavian (42 B. C.), Herod and his brother Phasael succeeded in securing the favor of Antony, who appointed them tetrarchs of the country of the Jews. Thus Hyrcanus lost even the appearance of civil power. In B. C. 40, Palestine being invaded by Parthians, Phasael and Hyrcanus were captured by guile, Herod was compelled to flee, and Antigonus, sole surviving son of Aristobulus II, was set up as king by the Parthians.
- 40-37. Antigonus. Herod going to Rome secured a decree of the senate declaring him king of Judea. After a struggle of three years Herod captured Jerusalem, and Antigonus was carried away to Antioch and beheaded by order of the Romans. Thus Herod became king of Judea in fact, and the rule of the Asmonean family was ended.
- 37-4. Herod the Great. Herod caused the death of the only remaining male member of the Asmonean family, and by shrewd diplomacy retaining the favor of Rome throughout his reign, held uninterrupted sway. After the battle of Actium, 32 B. C., though Herod had previously been on Antony's side, he shrewdly established himself in the favor of Augustus, who confirmed his title of king, and restored him much of the territory lost by Hyrcanus. The reign of Herod was characterized by vigor of administration, by activity in the erection of buildings and cities, and by selfish ambition, which, joined with a suspicious disposition, led

- B. C. him to acts of the greatest cruelty, including even the putting to death of his own wife and children.
4. On the death of Herod his kingdom was, in accordance with his will confirmed in essential points by Rome, divided among three of his surviving sons. Archelaus received Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, with the title of ethnarch; Herod Antipas, Galilee and Perea, with the title of tetrarch; Philip, Auranitis, Trachonitis, and Batanea, with the title of tetrarch.
- 6 A. D. Archelaus, being accused at Rome by a delegation of his subjects, was banished to Vienne in Gaul. His territory was converted into a Roman province of the third class under the name of Judea, and placed under procurators who were to a certain extent subject to the authority of the governor of Syria. This continued to be the status of Judea (including Samaria and Idumea) till the year 41 A. D. Pontius Pilate was the fifth of the seven procurators who ruled during this period, and was in authority A. D. 26-36.
34. After a peaceful administration of thirty-eight years, Philip, tetrarch of the northeastern regions, died. His territory was added to the Roman province of Syria.
37. Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great and Mariamne, received from the Emperor Caligula the territories formerly held by Philip, together with those of Lysanias, with the title of king.
39. Herod Antipas, being induced by his wife Herodias to seek the title of king, was instead deposed and banished to Lyons in Gaul, where he died. His territory was given to Agrippa.
41. The province of Judea (under procurators since 6 A. D.) was also given to Herod Agrippa I. Thus all Palestine was once again a vassal kingdom under a descendant of both the Idumean and Asmonean families.
44. Herod Agrippa I died (see Acts, chap. 12) and his territory was placed under a Roman procurator under the supervision of the governor of Syria.
- 53-66. Agrippa II, son of Agrippa I, received from the Emperor Claudius the northeastern territories formerly held by Philip and Lysanias, and the title of king. To this Nero added a part of Galilee and Perea. Thus southern Palestine was under



- A. D. Roman procurators, and northern—in part also eastern—Palestine was under a Herodian prince, as in the period from 6 to 34 A. D. This arrangement continued till the outbreak of the Judeo-Roman war in 66 A. D.
- 66–73. The Judeo-Roman war.
70. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

LITERATURE.—Ancient. First and Second Books of the Maccabees, especially the First. The Works of Josephus. The New Testament.

Modern. SCHÜRER, *History of the Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ*. 5 vols. Chas. Scribner's Sons. \$8.00. This is, on the whole, the best modern work. FAIRWEATHER, *From the Exile to the Advent*. Chas. Scribner's Sons. 80 cents. Gives a condensed history of the Jews in the period indicated in the title; admirable for a book of so small compass. MUIRHEAD, *The Times of Christ*. Chas. Scribner's Sons. 60 cents. Contains a rapid sketch of Jewish history from Herod the Great to the fall of Jerusalem, but deals chiefly with the social and religious life, discussing it topically. STAPFER, *Palestine in the Time of Christ*. Armstrong & Son. \$2.50. Presents the social and religious life of the people in an interesting form, but is greatly marred by inaccuracy of statement. SEIDEL, *In the Time of Jesus*. Randolph. 75 cents. In scope similar to Muirhead's book; in general characteristics like Stapfer's, but briefer and more accurate. EDERSHEIM, *Life and Times of Jesus* (2 vols. Longmans. \$2.00), gives in Appendix IV a condensed account of the political history, and in connection with the life of Jesus much valuable information concerning the social, moral, and religious life of the people. These latter topics are treated by themselves topically in EDERSHEIM, *Jewish Social Life*. Revell & Co. \$1.25.